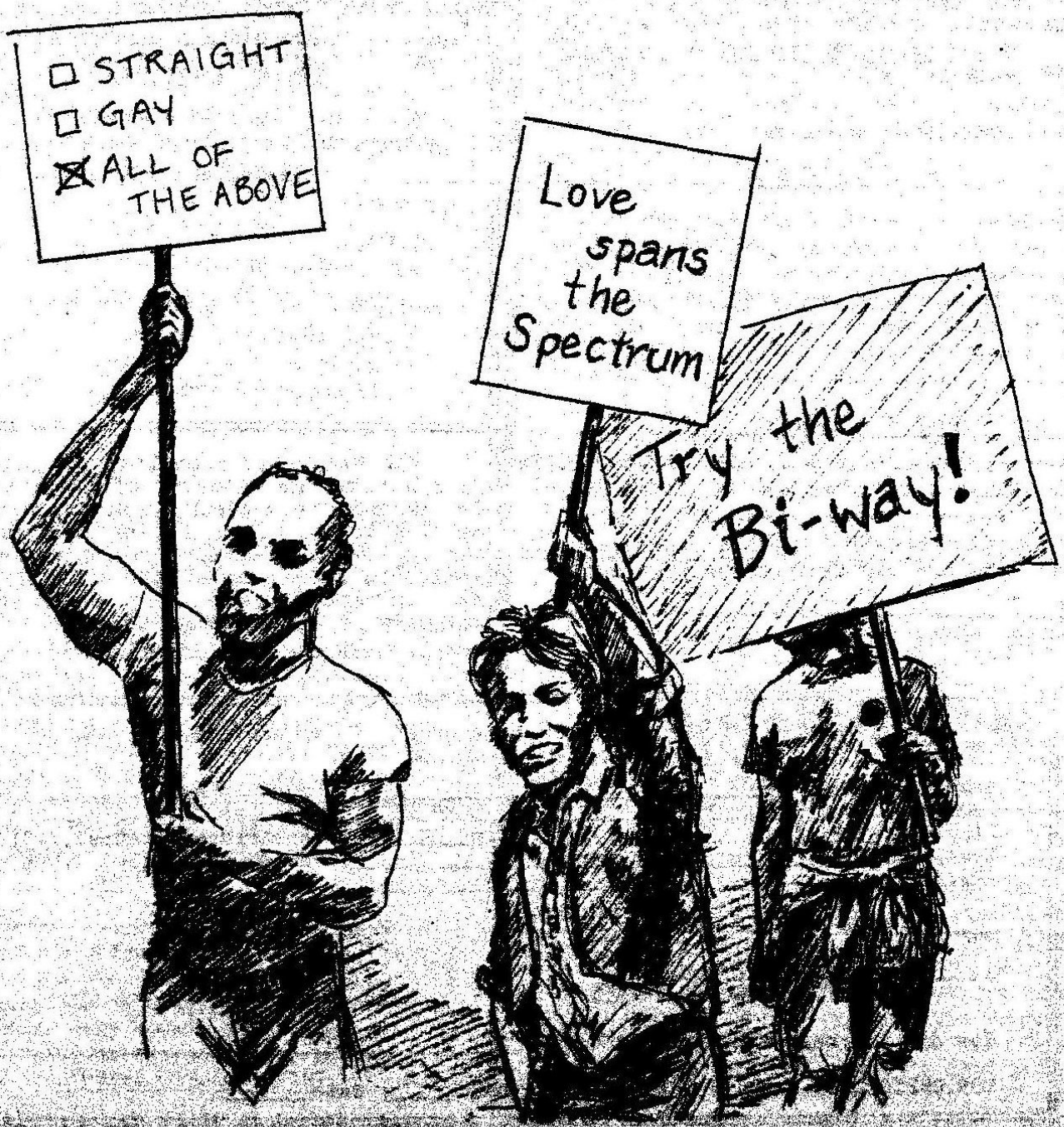
THE BI-MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Bisexual Center

Volume 8 Number 4 July-August 1984



TRANSITIONS

We find ourselves having to say good-bye (and expressing our thanks for their hard work) to two members of our Board of Directors: Charlene Michael and Nate Brown. Their energy will be missed. In addition, Autumn Courtney has resigned as social director, although remaining on the Board. Jay Paul will be taking over as Editor from Nate Brown's able hands, and is looking for anyone willing to either help out or to contribute new material to The Bi-Monthly.

If you would like to have a say in what activities are offered by the Center, or in determining what we print in the newsletter, GET INVOLVED!! The Board will be starting a tremendous outreach project to its members to see who is willing to offer some time and energy to different projects at the Center. We all need to give a little to keep the Center alive--your enthusiasm and commitment are vital!!!

BOARD MEETINGS

The next two meetings of the Board of Directors of the Bisexual Center will be held on Monday, July 9th and Monday, August 13th at the Center. Board meetings are open to Bi Center members only. We invite those interested in sharing their ideas and suggestions to attend. 7:30 PM.

NONPROFIT STATUS

We have finally received our Federal Nonprofit status, which means that any donations are fully tax-deductible as provided by law. Normally your cancelled check is your receipt, however separate receipts can be provided.

Cover illustration by Jay Paul

THE BISEXUAL CENTER

1757 Hayes Street
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(415) 929-9299

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EVENTS

FOURTH-OF-JULY CAMPING TRIP

This year will mark our fifth annual camping trip to the Russian River. Past trips have proved to be some of the most exciting and liberating events of the years of our existence. Coming on the heels of the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade (June 24) the strength and unity gained from the march becomes multiplied during the three days we spend together.

We will be at the river Friday through Monday, June 29th through July 2nd. This is a members-only event; the cost is $10.00 per person per night. If you have not yet made reservations, call the Bi Center at 929-9299, or pay upon arrival at the campsite. You may come up for one, two or all three days. See you there!

******ADVERTISEMENT*******

Russian River cabin for rent in Forestville near the Rusty Nail. Day, week or monthly rentals for 2 bedroom cabin with all day sun and 3/4 deck. Can sleep 4-6 people comfortably. No telephone or TV (sound wonderful?). Call Billy Robinson at 585-5992 in S.F. for more details.

POTLUCK PICNIC IN THE PARK!

Get those blankets and picnic baskets out of the closet--it's time for the Bi Center's Sunday in the Park. It will be an afternoon of food, fun, sun and friends! If you have a musical instrument (or anything else you'd like to play with in the park), bring it along!

The picnic is Sunday, July 29th. We will be meeting at 12:00 noon at the Shakespeare Garden in Golden Gate Park (next to the California Academy of Sciences--we'll post a map at the Center for anyone needing directions). Bring some picnic fare and only $2 for members, $3 for nonmembers.

DAVID'S PARTY

David Lourea will be hosting a 50's style rock dance on Saturday, August 18th. Bring your fashions from the era and join us, 9PM for a nostalgic look back in time. This will be a members only event, BYOB, and the donation asked at the door will be $4.00.

WOMENS MASSAGE NIGHT

There will be another womens massage night on Monday, July 23rd. Bring a sheet, some oil, and a snack to share. At the Bi Center, 7:30. A $3-$5 donation is requested.

Freedom to Love People

by Dan Robinson

Let's dispose of a few myths. "A bisexual man is one who will let either a man or a woman suck his cock." In any group there will be a few who are selfish and insist on always having the dominant role. When having sex with a woman I have to mainly take the male role, at least for some activities. Therefore when I'm with a man, I enjoy being able to, part of the time, be the female. I don't dominate or submit. I just participate and enjoy.

"Bisexuality is just an excuse for screwing around." Personally I don't need any excuse! I don't have any guilt feelings about it (or much of anything else for that matter).

Some gays say bisexuality is "flexible intimacy." So what's wrong with flexibility? Gay is good, bi is better.

I think the increasing power and number of gay and lesbian separatist groups is a possible path back to increasing patriarchy. I can imagine individual feelings of male superiority, which many of both sexes still retain, turning into feelings of male society superiority.

Bisexuality and "poly-intimacy" go well together since one can't possibly be actively bisexual without also being somewhat poly-intimate. Freedom in one area often leads to a desire for freedom in others. Most of our lives are a compromise between our real needs and the traditions of "civilization."

WHERE WILL YOU BE JULY 15TH? JOIN THE FIRST NATIONAL BISEXUAL RALLY!

It's time to stand up and be counted, to give a display of bisexual visibility and solidarity that neither the heterosexual nor lesbian and gay communities can ignore! On July 15th, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Bi Pol is sponsoring a rally in front of Moscone Center for bisexual, lesbian and gay rights. If you have ever felt that your bisexuality was ignored or invalidated by others, COME TO THIS RALLY TO SHATTER THE MYTHS OF OUR NON-EXISTENCE!! We expect to get bisexuals from across the country to come to the rally, and wish to show both the Democratic Party and our country that we are a community of size that must be acknowledged and reckoned with. If you attend any bisexual event this year, make sure that you attend this one--and bring as many friends as you can!

THE BISEXUAL IDENTITY

Part I. Changing Perspectives on Sexuality Since the 1800's

by Jay Paul

(First of a series of articles to appear in The Bi-Monthly, based on the author's article in The Journal of Homosexuality, 9(2/3) entitled "The Bisexual Identity: An Idea Without Social Recognition.")

In today's culture, we condemn as artificial the conventional dichotomization of sexual orientation, which demands that everyone be labeled either as homosexual or as heterosexual. Few realize that such a rigid system of identification is a relatively recent historical development. For centuries, sexual activity with one gender was not seen as precluding sexual activity with the other gender. In fact, most same-sex sexual activity was not exclusive of heterosexual behavior.

Nineteenth century science brought a change to all this. What was once seen as a vice or sinful behavior suddenly became a "condition" to be explored by scientists. It was not until 1869 that the term "homosexuality" came into being (coined by a Hungarian doctor, Benkert), and it would be years later before the term "heterosexuality" existed. Identifying persons as "homosexuals" rather than as "heterosexuals" was an act that could only occur as a consequence of scientific interpretations of human sexuality that emerged in the late 19th century.

Medical science in the 1800's was based on principles of biological determinism. Constitutional factors were carefully analyzed for clues to personality and behavior. The notion was that various psychological and behavioral traits were "pre-wired" into the biological organism. Man was viewed as less of a free agent and more as a victim of biology. Thus there was a shift in concern from social deviance to social deviants --from acts to individuals.

With regard to sexuality, societal norms were translated into supposed norms of biological functioning. Rather than a question of sin, the focus of debate on homosexual behavior ranged around questions of chemical imbalances and physiological anomalies. Science looked for differences in physical characteristics to isolate those persons known for homosexual behavior from the rest of the population. This focus on proving differences (spurious or real) served to heighten the false dichotomy of homosexual/heterosexual, denying the fact of bisexuality in the population. In addition, the automatic assumption of the biological normality of heterosexual behavior meant that homosexual behavior could only be explained by science as an anomaly or failure of certain biological factors.

Scientists of the period varied somewhat in their theories, although all were guided by the basic premises outlined above. Ulrichs described male homosexuality as a congenital variation in which a "female soul" inhabited a male body; in female homosexuality, a "male soul" hypothetically inhabited a female body. Theories such as this (which associated a person's masculinity or femininity with the gender of a person's sexual partners) furthered the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy by implying its basis in the male/female dichotomy. Thus the term "inversion" was used for homosexuality to denote the supposed reversal of the individual's appropriate gender identity.

This left no room for recognition of bisexuality, except as a type of "psychical hermaphroditism," an imperfection in the process of sexual differentiation. Other scientists, such as Krafft-Ebing, recognized individuals with bisexual histories, but tended to classify them as "congenitally homosexual" with "acquired" heterosexual interests and activities. This is suggestive of a bias that homosexuality is more determinative of an individual's sexual identity than is coexistant heterosexuality.

Freud's work, although based upon outdated biological suppositions, signaled the end of a period of emphasis on biological factors. He developed a scheme of psychosexual development, recognizing that "the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women...is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature. A person's final sexual attitude is not decided until after puberty and is the result of a number of factors."

He felt that homosexual feelings were something everyone had to deal with in the normal course of maturation. Bisexuality was legitimized as a feature of normal sexual development--but only preliminary to the stage at which an individual develops a specifically heterosexual or homosexual orientation. Such a conceptualization sees bisexuality in the adult as some sort of developmental failure. Bisexuality is elsewhere subsumed by Freud under a discussion of varieties of homosexuality.

Despite Freud's claim of making no moral judgments about sexuality, his rigid and narrow definitions of mature sexual behavior (the "primacy of the genitals in the service of reproduction") as opposed to all he labeled sexual "perversions" strongly echo his culture's sexual mores. The judgments he makes are implicit in his organization of sexual behaviors as immature or perverse, and by the pathological quality of his explanations of homosexual behavior.

Stekel, a disciple of Freud, emphasized some of the basic contradictions inherent in such a theory of sexuality by his own discusssion of bisexuality, which follows some of the points outlined by Freud. He emphasized the "bisexual disposition" of all individuals up until puberty; after that point, the heterosexual theoretically represses any homosexuality and sublimates it in friendship and social bonding. Although Stekel normalized bisexuality on a theoretical level as basic to human nature, he pathologized anyone who expressed bisexuality in feelings and behaviors. A choice was expected to be made between homosexual and heterosexual activity, and Stekel refused to recognize any nonpathological expression of homosexuality. In other words, the bisexual was expected to act as a heterosexual. The contradictory nature of his discussion apparently stems from two of his basic beliefs: (1) that bisexuality may possibly be natural for the human species, but (2) that heterosexuality is normative for the individual within society. Stekel was explicit in his translation of social norms into standards of psychological health: his assumption was that the healthy individual will endeavor to conform as closely as possible to established values and mores of society.

From the late 19th century to the early part of the 20th century, a revolution in conceptualizations of human sexuality had occurred in Western society, a product of the prevailing scientific philosophy of the time, and a handful of physicians, psychiatrists, and sexologists. Sexual behavior was now intimately linked with the personality and/or physiology of the individual. Sexual orientation had become a significant identifying characteristic for people. Much of the impetus for the contributions of various theorists lay in their attempts to remove judgments of sexual behavior from the arena of morality and religion to that of "dispassionate" scientific thought. Many of these scientists were active in movements to decriminalize homosexuality in Europe in this period. The new perspectives they proposed were culture-bound and limited by the lack of any scientific work on the prevalence of various sexual behaviors within the general population. It would take the work of various anthropologists and the Kinsey group to provide the next shift in our understanding of human sexuality--especially in their evidence for bisexuality.

(To be continued.)

BI CENTER T-SHIRTS ON SALE!

As those of you who have been by the Center recently have probably noticed, we have had some new T-shirts screened with the Bi Center's name and logo on the front. Be sure to buy one soon--if not for the Parade, then for the bisexual rally being organized by BiPol for July 15th for the Democratic National Convention. Increase bisexual visibility in the streets! The T-shirts are only ten dollars each.

FAMILIES WITH A BI, GAY OR LESBIAN PARENT

Jay Paul, a member of the Bi Center Board, is looking for women and men to be interviewed for his doctoral dissertation. He is interested in people in the age range of 19-29 who have a bisexual, lesbian or gay parent. An interview and questionnaire focuses on respondents' family backgrounds and their conceptualizations of relationships, families, sexuality, and marriage. In addition, he is planning a larger study to begin in about a year's time that will involve a similar interview with adolescents (ages 13 to 18) with bisexual, lesbian or gay parents.

If you would like more information about this project, or feel you or a friend might be interested in participating in this study, please contact Jay for more details.

Write Jay Paul c/o The Bisexual Center, 1757 Hayes St., S.F., CA 94117 OR c/o The University of California, Psychology Clinic, 2205 Tolman, Berkeley, CA 94720. Messages can also be left for him at the Psychology Clinic at (415)642-2055.

Community Bulletin Board

TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY RAPS

We have returned to our former schedule of Tuesday and Wednesday evening mixed rap groups. This is a meeting place to discuss issues relating to your present or recent experiences, and not for therapy or problem-solving. If you would like support for your feelings around bisexuality or any other subject, this is the place to ask for it. Starting at 7:30 and going until about 10, we ask for a donation of from $3-$5.

A.A. GROUP

Sponsored by a local group of Alcoholics Anonymous, the "Bi Bye Booze" group meets each Monday night at the Bi Center from 7:00 to 8:00. New members are welcome.

BI POL MEETINGS

Bi Pol is a Bi, Lesbian, Gay independent political action group. Come join our monthly general membership meeting Fridays, July 20th and August 17th, at 1757 Hayes Street, 5:30 PM. Space donated by the Bisexual Counseling Service.

WOMENS RAP GROUP

At 7:30 PM on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month, the Bisexual Center offers a drop-in rap group for women to share thoughts and feelings around issues of bisexuality. Not a self-help therapy/ support group or an intellectualization session, but an opportunity to meet with women and share relevant issues in our lives. Women of all sexual orientation are welcome. A $3-$5 donation is requested.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

On June 7th, Bi Pol held a successful news conference in front of the Moscone Center, well attended by representatives from the press, television and radio networks. On this anniversary of the defeat of Anita Bryant and the Dade County ordinance, Bi Pol announced its plans for participation in the Parade and for its bisexual rally July 15th before the opening of the Democratic National Convention. It looks as though the Bi Pol rally will receive much-needed coverage by the news media.

BI'S GETTING ORGANIZED!!

Letters we have received this spring have informed us of a number of bisexual groups. So here follows a list of the organizations, with details about them as given by our correspondents. If you can supply more information about these groups, or hear of any new groups forming, please let us know at the Center!

PORTLAND, OR:

BEG (Bisexual Exploration Group) started last year with about 50 members and has been working on growing. Contact Myra Frieden at (503)238-6587 or Priscilla Russell at 8170 S.W. 74th Ave, Portland, OR 97223.

HUGS is a bisexual women's group whose acronym was translated differently by one letter writer and a writer in GCN (as either "Heroines United for Growth of Self" or as "Heroines United for Group Support"). Unfortunately, we have no address or phone number for this group presently; inquiries should turn this up soon.

For those under 21 in Portland, there is a group for bisexuals, gays and lesbians called "Windfire"--call (503)244-3225.

CLEVELAND, OH:

James Polefko is working on forming a bisexual organization in the Cleveland area. He can be contacted by writing him at 3387 West 86th St., Cleveland, OH 44102, or by phoning (216)961-6181.

LONDON, ENGLAND:

If in England, you may wish to visit the London Bisexual Group (LBG). Formed in the Fall of 1981 with 76 people at the first meeting, they hold meetings at a gay men's club, Heaven, every Tuesday. They've begun their own newsletter (also called The Bi-Monthly) this past winter. According to a member who visited the Bisexual Center a year ago, they are interested in developing bi networks around the world, building bi visibility and international recognition of the bisexual identity. Their mailing address is BM Bl2, London WC1 N 3XX.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submission of articles and notices for the next BiMonthly is August 19. Please leave all materials in the folder on top of the filing cabinet marked "newsletter" or send them to the Center, ATTN: Jay Paul. Jay is assuming the post of editor for the time being, but is in need of a co-editor; please notify him if you can help.

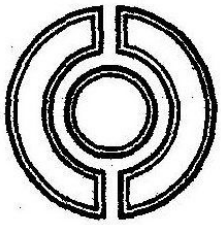
BI-MONTHLY CALENDAR 1984

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Russian River P.3	2 ♀ RAP P.6 — AA GP P.6 Mondays	3 Tues. RAP P.6	4 Wed. RAP P.6	5	6	7
8	9 Board Mtg. P.2	10	11	12	13	14
15 Bi Rally P.3	16 ♀ RAP P.6	17	18	19	20 Bi Pol P.6	21
22	23 ♀ Massage Night	24	25	26	27	28
29 GGP Picnic P.3	30	31				

AUGUST

			1 Wed. RAP P.6	2	3	4
5	6 ♀ RAP P.6 — AA GP P.6 Mondays	7 Tues. RAP P.6	8	9	10	11
12	13 Board Mtg. P.2	14	15	16	17 Bi Pol P.6	18 50's Rock Dance P.3
19 Wedgewood Dessert P.6	20 ♀ RAP P.6	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS

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